

**THE
HARIJAN MOVEMENT**

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I

HARIJAN is a new and generic name, which Mahatma Gandhi has given to the community of the untouchables. As a matter of fact, there is no compact community, which may be termed as such. It is a group of several communities, or castes of the Hindus, loosely knit together, suffering from common disabilities. They were called Achuts, or untouchables, till Mahatma Gandhi found for them the above innocent name, indicating their nearness to God. This has now successfully replaced the former offensive designation.

The dictionary meaning of the word "Harijan" is "Man of God." Mahatma Gandhi has given them this name, because he believes that, though they are despised on earth, they are near to God and loved by Him. The name is now well established, and is recognised, even in Government documents.

It is practically impossible to give a complete list of the castes, which are considered as untouchables, owing to their being so numerous. Moreover, there is hardly any certainty about them. There are castes treated as untouchables in one province or in one locality, which are absolutely free from any disability in another province or locality. For practical purposes, therefore, all the castes classed as scheduled castes by the Governments in different provinces are accepted as Harijans.

A great controversy, particularly in Bengal, arose on this question at the time of the introduction of the 1935 Constitution, when as a consequence of the Poona Pact and the communal award, special political privileges were given to the Harijans. Certain castes which were included in the scheduled

lists, were not untouchables in practice, and others, which happened to be left out of the lists suffered from the disability. There is, therefore, no absolute certainty with regard to the castes, with some exceptions, which may definitely be classed as Harijans.

The whole matter needs investigation and the Harijan Sevak Sangh has taken this matter in hand, and has appointed two scholars to do research work in this connexion. They are making their investigations in different provinces and their report is awaited.

In addition to the difficulties already mentioned there is also no certainty about their numbers. Different Government reports have given different figures. But if we go by the last census report of 1931, their number in the whole of India is 50,192,000. In actual fact, there may be a little difference, but this figure may be taken to be approximately the right figure. They are to be found in all provinces and states of India. Their number is largest in the U. P., where they form 23 per cent. of the population. *Taking the Hindus separately, they form a little over one-fifth of the whole Hindu population of India.*

The extent and the manner of the observance of untouchability differs from place to place. Before the 1935 Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore and the entry by the Harijans into the temples of Madura and other places in Tamil Nad (south-eastern Madras) during the last few months, Kerala (Travancore, Cochin and Malabar) and Tamil Nad were supposed to be the worst, where even unapproachability and invisibility were observed. It was in these areas that certain public roads and localities were prohibited to the Harijans.

Terrible Stories

The terrible stories of those days, recounting cruel injustices perpetrated on these unfortunate beings, are on the lips of people in the whole of India even to-day. But those

who still relate those stories, are not aware of the great change that has come over the minds of men in those parts, where untouchability has lost much of its sting. To-day they form the most forward bloc in this direction throughout the whole of India, in as much as in those parts exist the largest number of temples, which in actual practice, are open to the Harijans. To my knowledge it is now some of the Indian states which could easily be considered to be the most backward.

During recent years British Indian Provinces have made great progress with regard to Harijans. Yet there are certain disabilities which are common to all, with a slight difference of degree in each place. These common disabilities are non-admission to (1) temples, (2) public wells, (3) public schools (in some places), and (4) residential segregation.

In some places, they are refused the use of public buses and other vehicles. In some parts of Rajputana, caste Hindu prejudice against them has gone so far as to interfere in their ordinary human rights of eating good articles of food, wearing costly clothes and jewellery and various other matters of that nature. Most of these disabilities are not legal, but based only on custom and social prejudice.

Poverty Stricken

Most of the Harijans are poverty stricken. Previous to my association with Harijan work I had never seen such poverty in my life. The majority of them possess no land. Their housing conditions are appalling. Their remuneration in all branches of work is very small. In towns, as well as in villages, they generally occupy segregated areas, far away from the caste Hindu quarters. Generally the locality they live in is situated in the dirtiest part of the town, or the village. Owing to their disability of not being able to use the public wells, they generally suffer for want of water. This need is particularly great in the villages where in many places, it is difficult for them to get clean water, sufficient even for drinking purposes.

Even so, one should not be carried away with the idea that there is no wealthy individual among them. Stray individuals may always be found, who have managed to accumulate wealth. Most of these people have done so by charging exorbitant interest from their own caste people.

In education, Harijans are behind all other communities, their literacy figures throughout India being 2.35 per cent. One of the reasons for their educational backwardness is their disability to attend common schools, and this disability up till now has been very common in some parts. In spite of this, however a few highly educated Harijans are to be found in all parts of India, some of whom occupy high positions.

Their occupations are many and varied. The majority of them, of course, work on the land, mostly as labourers. All the so-called "dirty work" is entrusted to them by society. They remove dead cattle, prepare articles made of leather, weave cloth and mats, make ropes, baskets, brooms and other sundry articles of everyday use. Some of them are masons and most are workers on roads or fields on paltry daily wages.

They are undoubtedly most useful members of Society, and on whose labours Society rests. Its whole edifice would come down with a crash, if their work was withdrawn for even a short time. Yet Hindu Society has failed to recognize their services, and for centuries they have been terrible victims of prejudice.

More or less such injustices prevail in all countries and in all societies but untouchability is a form of prejudice peculiar to India. I do not think its equivalent can be found anywhere else in the world.

No Light

History throws no light as to the beginning and cause of this abominable custom. Many secular theories have been launched, but none of them are convincing. The popular mind, backed by a few orthodox pandits, associate the custom

with religion. But a large number of very learned Brahmins whose number is growing daily, have proved it to the hilt that this evil practice has no sanction in the *shastras*. On the contrary, the teachings of all the Hindu *Shastras* lay great stress on the cultivation of the practice of treating all human beings as equals, regarding them as the manifestations of the one and the same God, from whom all draw their sustenance.

By ignoring this great truth Hindu Society has done indescribable harm to its religion. This damage has not been confined to religion alone, but has spread out to other fields, which have stunted the growth of the whole nation.

II

WORK for the removal of untouchability, and the emancipation of the Harijans, is by no means of recent growth. In some form or other, it has continued for centuries. Practically all the Hindu religious reformers belonging to all parts of India are known to have paid special attention to the removal of this evil custom. Beginning from Bhagwan Buddha, down to the present day of Mahatma Gandhi, a series of illustrious saints can be recalled, who have regularly striven to befriend the Harijans.

Chaitanya, Tukaram, Nanak, Kabir and Dayanand Saraswati may be mentioned as examples of few among them. But barring the last-named, the efforts of all the rest were confined to only bringing about a change of ideology. By steady and persistent preaching and precept, they hoped to change the practice.

Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was the first in recent years to draw the attention of his followers to the desirability of undertaking practical work. As a result of that, much good has been done through the agency of the Arya Samaj, particularly in the Punjab.

In the Maharashtra, Shri V.R. Shinde's work through his mission has been noteworthy. In the South and in the Punjab, Christian missionaries have worked among the Harijans, but their work cannot be called the work of Harijan emancipation, because almost invariably, they converted them to Christianity. Other agencies like D.C. Mission, Nandnar Math, and others have also contributed to this work. But an all India organization of the size and status of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, as started by Mahatma Gandhi, was never undertaken before.

It was in the year 1932, in the month of September, at a public meeting held in Bombay, that the foundations of the Harijan Sevak Sangh were laid. It came out of the travail of Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast, which he had undertaken to protest against Communal Award of Mr.

Ramsay MacDonald so far it related to the representation of the Harijans in the constitution of 1935. It is well known that his fast succeeded in getting the Award revised, and it was replaced by what is called the Poona Pact.

But the mere revision of the Award was not sufficient for Mahatma Gandhi. He wanted to erase altogether the distinction of the Harijan and the caste Hindu. He considered untouchability to be against the Hindu *Shastras*, and held the opinion that it damaged immensely not only Hindu Society but the whole Indian Nation.

Independent Body

He, therefore, started work for the removal of untouchability early in life and from the time he took control of the Congress organization, he made it a necessary item of the constructive work of the Congress. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, however, is not an organization of the Congress. It is an independent non-political body, whose activities are strictly confined to the removal of untouchability. But it may be said as an allied organization to the Congress, as much as many workers are common to both, though Shri G.D. Birla and Shri A.V. Thakkar, the President and Secretary of the Sangh respectively are both non Congressmen.

In 1933 and 34, Mahatma Gandhi toured throughout India, to collect funds for the Sangh, and to arouse public opinion against untouchability. The tour drew the attention of the whole country to this important problem, and centres of work were established in all provinces, and many Indian States. The All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, with a board having 42 members from all parts of India, is responsible for the carrying out of all the work. It has its head office in Delhi.

The board meets only once a year, but there is an executive committee, which meets more frequently, and to which is entrusted the day-to-day work of the Sangh. There are 25 Provincial and State Boards, with 169 district committees working under them. All those centres of work

have a two-fold mission—that of converting the hearts of the caste Hindus, and that of bettering the social, economic and educational conditions of the Harijans. More stress is laid on giving social service to the Harijans than on doing propaganda on which a very limited portion, namely only 5 per cent of the expenditure is incurred.

Harijan Schools

Greatest stress is laid on education. At one time, the Sangh was running as many as 1,298 preparatory schools of which 37,089 Harijan children were taking advantage. Such separate schools were necessary in the early stages, because of their peculiar social and economic conditions. The Harijan children were not taken into the ordinary schools, and even if they were, owing to their depressed mental condition, they were not in a position to take advantage of them. As conditions have improved, and a fair number of these children are being admitted into public schools, the number of schools run by the Sangh has now been considerably reduced. Hostels for girls and boys—94 in number—are run by the Sangh. For bringing a change in the lives of the children these hostels are more effective than the schools. The lessons of cleanliness, unselfishness and discipline, which the children learn there, are likely to revolutionize not only their individual lives, but the life of the whole community.

There are two big residential vocational schools, one in Delhi and another in Madras, where over one hundred boys are being trained in different handicrafts. Another big centre is being developed at Allahabad. By the Central Board alone, scholarships to the value of Rs. 10,000 a year are given to college boys and girls. The provincial boards and the district committees provide their own scholarships, and this raises considerably the number and value of scholarships given. Large sums are spent annually on providing reading material and examination fees etc., for the children.

Medical aid is provided by having dispensaries near the Harijan quarters. At present 13 such regular dispensaries

are working and thousands take advantage of them daily. Over and above this, provision for medical aid is made in most centres. It is one of the most popular of the Sangh's work. Much relief is given to the Harijans by providing wells for them. The Sangh has an ear-marked *pāni* fund for this purpose, and up till now about 1,700 wells have been constructed and repaired under its auspices.

On the cultural side, *Harikirtans* and *Katha* recitals (the reading of the sacred books) are held in their quarters. Caste Hindus are induced to join them on these occasions and on festival days.

Panchayats are strengthened, sweepers' unions are formed, co-operative credit societies are started wherever possible. In several places, housing societies and colonies have been started through the instrumentality of the Sangh. The giving up of drink and carrion eating and better and frugal living is encouraged. In the South, as well as in some parts of Central and Western India, some workers are living in Harijan quarters in remote villages. All this has a very salutary effect on the lives of the Harijans, who are advancing very rapidly. But the problem is so great that all this effort is like a drop in the ocean, and only serves to show how much more remains to be done.

When a vast population of 50,192,000 souls is concerned work among a few thousands can not take us far. The need for workers is very great and a whole army is required. The Central Sangh has started a corps of workers, who have pledged themselves to the service of the Harijans for five years.

Provision has been made for 50 such workers to begin with. It is proposed to have such service corps for the Provinces as well. The devoted service of these men, pledged to work on a mere pittance of a living wage, is bound to bear fruit. It is a long-felt want, which has now been fulfilled. It is hoped that, with the coming in of this corps of service, the work of the Sangh will be much enriched.

III

THE acceptance of office by the Congress in July, 1937, marked a definite advance in the path of Harijan progress. Its commitment to the removal of untouchability and the Poona Pact (to which Gandhiji was a party), which was its great moral obligation, made it incumbent on the Congress Governments to do their utmost to restore the Harijans their lost status in society. During their short stay in power, they exerted themselves in a variety of ways to fulfil their obligations, and looking back on their work of nearly two and a half years duration, one has every reason to be proud of their achievements.

The very first act of these Governments was to share their newly acquired power and responsibility with their Harijan brethren, by giving them ministerial and secretarial offices in the different Provinces. Accordingly, three had Harijan Ministers, of which Assam had two and Bihar and Madras one each. U.P. had two Harijan Parliamentary Secretaries and Bihar and Madras one each.

The appointment of so many men belonging to a community condemned to untouchability by a large section of the people was bound to have a tremendous psychological effect. It perforce taught the people to respect those whom they were in the habit of despising. It also put hope and inspiration into the hearts of the Harijans, who were given a practical demonstration of the fact that henceforth there did not exist any bar in their way of achieving the highest positions in the land. That was a great step forward, but there were many other ways in which the interests of the interests of the Harijans were promoted.

The measures undertaken on their behalf could be classed under the headings of legislative, administrative and Educative measures. Bombay and Madras were foremost with regard to the first, viz. legislation. Bombay was the first to pass the Bombay Harijan Temple Worship (Removal of Disabilities) Act, which is a

permissive measure, enabling the trustee or trustees of temples; if they so desired, to admit Harijans into the temples, notwithstanding the prevailing custom or the instrument of trust, or the terms of dedication, or anything else debarring the Harijans from entering into the temples.

Legal Disabilities

The Government also framed the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act, which as the name indicates, sought to remove all legal disabilities, placing the Harijans in full possession of their civic rights of the use of all roads, wells, schools, conveyances, etc., on the same terms with others. Unfortunately, the Ministry had to resign before it was possible to get this Bill through the legislature. Similarly, Madras has to its credit the Malabar Temple Entry Act and the Removal of Disabilities Act with the same objective in view as the above mentioned Bombay Bill. But while the Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Worship Act applies to the whole of Bombay Presidency, the Madras Act applies only to Western portion of Madras, called Malabar. There is another big difference. The Malabar Temple Entry Act is much more broad-based than the Bombay one. According to this Act, the fundamental authority is the ordinary temple worshiper, who is required to give his own decision. Each big temple in every big *taluka* has to take a referendum. It is only on the result of the referendum being favourable that the temple door can be thrown open to the Harijans. Likewise, the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act establishes the legal right of the Harijans to the use of all social amenities maintained by public funds.

The C.P. Government had also introduced a Temple Entry Bill, which was referred to a Select Committee before it resigned.

Social Evil

It is impossible to eradicate an established social evil of centuries which has so deeply sunk into the life and

customs of the people as untouchability by mere enactments. But these acts have placed a great weapon in the hands of the reformer, who has used them for his own purpose. One may not imagine that these Acts have brought about an immediate revolution. The life of an average Harijan continues to be the same hard life beset with difficulties and hardships. The complaints that in most areas the Acts are inoperative are common, but a beginning has been made, and seeds are sown, which are bound to fructify in the very near future.

Much has been attempted by means of the administrative machinery to which efforts have been made to give an equalitarian orientation.

~~Thus copious instructions have been issued to various~~ departments mostly in Madras and Bombay not to tolerate the caste distinction in any aspect. Revenue and police officers have been especially instructed to see that the Government policy of the removal of Civil Disabilities is fully implemented. Authorities controlling public hospitals, wells, Schools, dispensaries and "dharamshalas" have been impressed with the desirability of giving equal treatment to all. Government pressure has been brought on keepers of public entertainment and public service conveyances to disallow all distinctions of caste. This has created a wholesome effect and injustices, which were taken for granted a few years ago, are resented, brought to public notice and repaired where possible.

Done Their Bit

Madras and Bombay have been foremost in using the administration for the removal of untouchability, but other Provinces have also done their bit by following their lead in issuing instructions to the same effect. Both Madras and Bombay created machinery to look after the interests of the backward and depressed classes long before the year 1937, when the Congress Governments came in. It is the same machinery that has now been consolidated and enlarged and brought more in touch with the public workers. In both

these Provinces boards and committees have been established composed of officials and non-officials in most districts to further the education and the general well-being of the Harijans. The U.P. also has a special officer in charge of depressed class education. The duties of these committees and boards and officers range from finding out grievances and needs of the communities in their charge, suggesting ways and means of removing them, looking after their education and giving advice in connexion with that.

Big steps have been taken by all Provinces in the sphere of education. In spite of financial stringency, they have all ear-marked sums for Harijan education much in advance of what the previous Governments did. Thus last year's expenditure on Harijan education in the U.P. was Rs. 3,81,000 in the C.P. Rs. 34,000; in Madras a sum of Rs. 12.43 lakhs has been earmarked, for the general amelioration of the Harijans, including education. Bihar has provided over Rs. 18000 for giving Scholarships and another Rs. 1140 for industrial and technical training. Orissa has also made a special grant, over and above the usual amount.

Free Education

More was accomplished by other means than by the actual sums spent on education, which under the circumstances, had to be limited. Thus in the C.P. and Berar all education from the Primary class to the University degrees has been made free for the Harijans. Even Examination fees are not levied. Likewise the Bihar, Madras and Bombay Governments had issued orders making all colleges education free for them. U.P. has also done the same with regard to Government Schools and Colleges. Free hostels have been started in many places. Even in provinces, where education has not been made absolutely free exemptions from fee are given on a generous scale, both in schools and colleges. Notwithstanding all these facilities, separate schools for Harijan children are run by the Government, where reading and writing materials are supplied free. Scholarships are everywhere given for all

classes of education. In Madras, and Bombay, the Governments refused recognition and aid to schools where any distinction of caste was observed. It is the duty of local board teachers to show the actual attendance of scheduled class pupils before their schools are entitled to any grant from the Government.

Relief work has been done practically in all Provinces by constructing wells for them for which particular sums were earmarked annually. Land for sweepers' colonies has been granted by some. Co-operative credit societies have been started. In the case of appointments preference is given to scheduled class candidates, where other qualifications are the same. In some places reservations are made for them and facilities are provided by giving them age and other exemptions. In the U. P. two Harijans have recently been appointed to the Provincial Civil Service.

Close Co-operation

Most of this work has been started, and accomplished in close co-operation with the Harijan Sevak Sangh. In the C. P., U. P., Bihar, Bombay Presidency, Orissa and Madras Presidency the Governments even give financial aid to the Sangh Committees in different districts. Bihar, Assam and Orissa requisitioned the services of the General Secretary of the Sangh to frame schemes for the promotion of Harijan well-being.

The deplorable service and living conditions of the employees of the municipal committees all over the country have attracted the attention of the Sangh for some time. But no appreciable work was done on any large scale by Provinces in this connexion. Under the Presidentship of the General Secretary of Sangh, the C. P. Government appointed a committee to make recommendations for the betterment of this class of public servants. But the Government had no time to give practical effect the recommendations of the Committee before it resigned. Similarly, the U. P. Government also appointed a committee for the same purpose

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with two workers of the Sangh as its members. This committee has not yet finished its work.

And so this in brief, is the story of the work of the Congress for Harijans in the different Provinces. This is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Their good intentions and earnest efforts are transparently clear from what has been done. A start has been made. I am sure the work will continue, and very soon the time will come when Harijans will enjoy an equal status with the rest of the people in all aspects of life.

IV

IT has often been said by the leaders of the Harijan movement that temple entry by the Harijans is the crux of the whole movement. This assertion has been hotly contested by another section, who think that the real problem is economic, with an educational and social side to it. They maintain that, if Harijans had education and their economic conditions were good, untouchability would disappear by itself, and even if it did not, it would not matter much.

There is difference of opinion among the Harijans themselves. There are men of faith among them, in very large numbers, who are keen on entering the temples, whose joy is boundless when they are admitted into them, and are allowed *darshan* and worship. There is another section consisting of young men, many of whom are affected by Western ideas, in whose eyes the right of temple entry has no value. Often enough these men put us the question—why we, the Harijan Sevaks, waste our energy in getting the temples open for them—temples in which young men and women of education are fast losing faith?

There are a few who even impute motives, and allege that, as the caste Hindu *clientele* of the temples is diminishing, Harijans are being forced into the temples to replace them. But the number of those who hold the latter view among the Harijans, as well as the non-Harijans, is very small. Much the larger portion is of those who consider temple entry the acid test by which the removal of untouchability can be measured.

Untouchability, in its wider aspect of high and low, exists in all countries and societies. It is a curse of civilization, which has come in with the civilization of mankind. But physical untouchability is a phenomenon, which is peculiar to India, and which is commonly believed to have its sanctions in religion. It is this most deep-rooted aspect of untouchability, which gives its importance to temple entry. To destroy it root and branch; it has to be killed at its very source of origin. All other work

of education and economic emancipation, however intensive, cannot take the place of temple entry, futile though it may appear to the few who are lacking in faith.

India's vast masses are still full of faith. Their lives are woven around the temples and the numerous sacred places of pilgrimage. Sacred days of festivals are still like little bright lighthouses in the otherwise dark and dreary ocean of their existence. It is, therefore, very important that in these places of worship, and on these occasions of festivals, men and women of common faith should meet each other on terms of equality, forgetting the prejudices which have kept them divided for centuries. Any other course would be like destroying the branches while manuring the roots.

Most Orthodox

Work on this behalf began long ago. It was in the year 1924 that the first organized *satyagraha* was started for this purpose in Kerala, though the object was very limited—opening of roads leading to Vaikom temple, the most orthodox spot in the whole of India. Since then the work of propaganda has continued, entailing another *satyagraha* in 1932, culminating in Shri Kelappan's fast unto death, which was suspended at Gandhiji's intervention. From Guruvayur the movement spread on to other areas. Madura and Srirangam in Madras took it up later, taking a referendum on the subject. The results of this referendum were very encouraging, as many as 80 per cent. of the temple going population declaring themselves in favour of temple entry.

Mahatma Gandhi's fast in September 1932, his Harijan tour in 1933-34 and the setting up of the Harijan Sevak Sangha gave great momentum to the movement. During Mahatma Gandhi's fast in 1932, several temples in odd corners of India were opened, but as this was done in the heat of the moment, without much previous preparation, in most cases this opening was temporary. The first real success achieved in this connection was the opening of the Travancore temples by a Royal Proclamation of H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore in the year

1935. It was a complete transformation, which Mahatma Gandhi called a miracle, as in Travancore even the shadow of a Harijan was considered to bring pollution to a caste Hindu.

Great and intensive work, with which I was closely associated, preceded the proclamation. In May, 1935, six months before the proclamation, I toured the whole State and was privileged to address scores of meetings attended by thousands of people. During that tour practically the whole Hindu population of the State declared themselves to be in favour of temple entry, and with one voice, requisitioned the Maharaja, in whom the power was vested, to open the temples for the Harijans. It was in response to this powerful public opinion that the proclamation was issued and that was the reason why it was so spontaneously acted upon. To-day Harijans worship at the temples on the same terms as the caste Hindus and the old distinction has practically gone.

This deep and genuine reform in the most orthodox centre, touched the whole of India. Stray temples in different parts continued voluntarily to open. Several were opened in the Bombay Presidency after the Temple Entry Act of 1938. The Maharaja Holkar followed the footstep of Travancore and opened all State temples by a proclamation. Public opinion in the State not being ready for the reform, the implementing of the proclamation was postponed and took place by a fresh order of the State in March 1939. Some other minor States such as Lathi, Aundh, Sandaur, Dewas and others have also opened their temples.

By far the greatest achievement was the opening last year of the ancient temple of Meenakshi-Sundareshwar at Madura, and along with it, of several others in Tanjore, Kuttalam, etc., in Tamilnad. The most significant feature of this event was that it was accomplished peacefully without the pressure of law or police or authority. Sri Rajagopalachariar, who gave his whole-hearted support to the cause, was very keen that temples should be opened without the aid of law by the voluntary freewill of the people. Consequently, a

similar campaign to the Travancore one was organized by the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Scores of meetings, which were attended by thousands, were held all over Tamilnad. I had the honour of presiding at most of these meetings, where I beheld the joyful spectacle of all sorts of men vying with each other in giving their support.

Among them were men and women who in their thoughts and way of living were otherwise orthodox. With full faith in the *Shastras*, on the basis of which temple entry was denied to the Harijans, they fervently supported the cause, declaring it to be absolutely in conformity with the dictates of their religion. No one can deny that in Tamilnad, as in Travancore, temples were opened in deference to a strongly expressed public opinion.

Of course, an act was passed by the Government of Sri Rajagopalachariar, later on, after the entry of the Harijans into the temples was already an accomplished fact, indemnifying and safeguarding against legal prosecution all those who took part in the reform. An ordinance by the Governor was also issued for the interim period with the same purpose.

Very Active

There are yet a few who oppose the movement and of late have been very active in their opposition. They still take their stand on the *Shastras*. But their numbers are constantly dwindling and they are fast losing ground. There are learned Pandits among them, well versed in the *Shastras*, who are still debating the point. But the reformists claim an increasing number of learned people, who have spared no pains in proving that the ancient *Shastras* have no sanction for Untouchability. Books, pamphlets, articles and leaflets are being constantly issued propagating that view. I have no doubt that, with the growing volume of public opinion on our side, the few resisters will soon be convinced of the justice of our cause.

With untouchability living, Hinduism was in great danger.

Under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, a great wave of purification has been set in motion. It will wash off the accumulated toxins of centuries in the old body of Sanatan Dharma, and give it a new life and vigour. It will release forces of love, goodwill, equality and freedom, which have great potential value in curing a great many ills of the world. Who knows this apparently small and comparatively insignificant reform may be the prototype of some great movement destined to bring peace to an aching world? Most great movements have been known to have had small beginnings.

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